

Delaware ports step up security measures- Cape Gazette

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Congress passed a comprehensive plan, Jan. 20, to dramatically improve security at the nation's major seaports, including the Delaware River's network of ports. "This is a much-needed piece of legislation, a giant first step toward protecting our seaports from terrorism and drug-smuggling," said Sen. Tom Carper.

The new law, dubbed the Port and Maritime Security Act of 2001, passed by unanimous vote. It provides for at least \$100 million in direct funds and \$400 million in loan guarantees to help seaports and federal law enforcement develop and implement wide-ranging security plans.

The measure stemmed from a review of seaport security shortcomings undertaken during the Clinton administration. The bill was approved by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation and sent to the full Senate for a vote prior to the Sept. 11 hijackings. However, the September events forced panel members to rework the legislation to address new concerns raised by the September attacks.

There are slightly more than 300 seaports and about 25,000 miles of coastal and inland waterways in the United States. The new seaport law identifies 50 top priority ports, including the Delaware River ports, as vulnerable to attack. Under the legislation, the U.S. Department of Transportation would oversee a meticulous review of each port's security and would approve security-enhancing proposals made by local port security councils.